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9. NEST MATERIAL KLEPTOPARASITISM BY SMALL SUNBIRD *NECTARINIA MINIMA* (SYKES, 1832)

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The Small Sunbird (*Nectarinia minima* Sykes, 1832) is endemic to the Western Ghats (Ali and Ripley 1987). It makes a typical pouch-like nest like other sunbirds, but the nest is smaller and more globular and suspended towards the end of horizontal branches of a tree or shrub. The nest is composed of fine plant fibres, small twigs, mosses, cobwebs, lichens, and soft seed hairs (Ali and Ripley 1987; Ali 1999; Hume 1890). Its nesting behaviour was described by Nayar (1934), but he did not report of thieving of nest material by the species and stated that only fresh material was used for nest construction. This note discusses the nest material piracy by a Small Sunbird from an active nest of Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* observed from the Silent Valley National Park (11° 04' – 11° 13' N; 76° 24' – 76° 29' E) in Kerala, India.

On February 23, 2010, at 14:26 hrs, a female Small Sunbird was found collecting the soft hair (pappus) of the seeds of *Asclepias curassavica* (Asclepiadaceae) growing in front of a camp shed in Silent Valley. In her third trip, she was accompanied by the male, but he did not collect nest material. The nest was located in a 2 m *Lantana* shrub towards a cliff. At about 16:10 hrs, she flew into the canopy of a 3 m *Glochidion* tree, *c.* 42 m from the nest. After a while, it came out from the canopy with a bunch of soft white hair in her beak. A close observation in the canopy showed a small cup-shaped nest placed on a forked branch. There was no bird in that nest and the sunbird must have taken the material from this nest as no such material was found in the canopy. After this incident, the bird continued to collect pappus from the plant for three times. Later, she again flew into the canopy of the tree but returned without carrying any nest material, and appeared anxious, probably since the nest was now occupied by an Oriental White-eye.

On the second day, I recorded her collecting pappus hairs 16 times and stealing nest material in 19 instances. In the second and ninth attempts, she was chased by the Oriental White-eye. After being chased off, she did not try stealing for the next one or more hours. On the third day, she stole lining material 12 times from 09:05–12:10 hrs. During this time, she collected pappus only three times. On a check in the evening, it was found that the nest was occupied by the White-eye. However, the next day, it appeared that the White-eye had abandoned its nest as it was severely damaged.

Nest material piracy is not uncommon in birds (see Ley *et al.* 1997; Narwade *et al.* 2005). Some of the reasons for nest material thieving are for saving time and energy in finding and transporting nest materials, low availability of suitable nest material and increased use of the same nest material by conspecifics and other birds in the nesting locality and decreased predation risk while collecting material from far off places (Jones *et al.* 2007; Ley *et al.* 1997). Nest failure and transfer of nest parasites may be some of the major disadvantages of species affected by nest material kleptoparasitism (Ley *et al.* 1997; VanderWerf 1988). In this reported case, the White-eye may have abandoned the nest due to the damage caused by the sunbird.

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10. NOTES ON SIGHTINGS OF GREEN AVADAVAT *AMANDAVA FORMOSA* IN A FEW LOCALITIES IN SOUTHERN ARAVALLIS, INDIA

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The Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa* is a threatened endemic and red data listed passerine species of India (Bhargava 1996; BirdLife International 2012). It is distributed mainly in Central India from Rajasthan (Mt. Abu) to Bihar and south Uttar Pradesh to north Andhra Pradesh (Manakadan *et al.* 2011). In Rajasthan, it has been mainly reported from the Mt. Abu area in Rajasthan (Lodhiya 1999; Tiwari and Varu 1999; Mehra and Sharma 2004). There is also a report of it as a resident species in the campus of the Desert Regional Station of the Zoological Survey of India in Jodhpur (Sivaperuman *et al.* 2004). In this paper, we report on our sightings of the species in other sites of Rajasthan, namely Kumbhalgarh, Kaler Forest Block, and Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary.

Kumbhalgarh: Kumbhalgarh lies in Rajsamand district in southern Aravallis. It is an extensive hilly area. A largeportion of this hilly zone comes under Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, while the rest is being managed as territorial forest. Numerous patches of revenue lands and villages are scattered across Kumbhalgarh. Many small grasslands, locally called beeds or beedas, are scattered all over the Kumbhalgarh zone. The historical Kumbhalgarh fort is present in this zone, hence whole area is popularly known as 'Kumbhalgarh'.

We first recorded the Green Avadavat in the Kumbhalgarh area in 1986 in Oda village in a sugarcane field. Its distribution here is largely confined to the vicinity of sugarcane fields, scrub forests and rolling hilly grasslands. Sightings were relatively more in Kumbhalgarh area till 1990. Till then, sugarcane cultivation was common from Kumbhalgarh to Gogunda area, and the species was recorded in Kumbhalgarh, Losing, Sayra, and Gogunda areas. In recent years, with increasing aridity and receding ground water table, sugarcane cultivation has reduced drastically, and this has probably affected the population of the Green Avadavat, as according to Ali and Ripley (1983), the Green Avadavat prefers grass and low bushes, tall grassland, sugarcane fields and boulder-strewn jungle. During 1986, flocks of 10–25 birds were recorded, but now sightings are scarce and flocks of more than 7–8 birds are rarely seen.

Kaler Forest Block and Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary: Sajjangarh is the smallest sanctuary of Rajasthan state, covering an area about 5.19 sq. km. It is present towards the western outskirts of Udaipur city in Udaipur district. Kaler Reserve Forest, west of the Sajjangarh Sanctuary, is contiguous with the sanctuary. Both the localities are situated nearly 80 km south of Kumbhalgarh. Sajjangarh and Kaler are part of southern Aravallis, with thorny and deciduous forests. The fringe area in both the localities has low density of trees. These fringes turn into rolling grasslands during the monsoon. Grass cover remains intact up to winter, but get grazed or destroyed by fires up to the beginning of summer. Kaler Forest Block and Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary have a sparse jungle of short trees intermixed with grassy patches: *Apluda mutica*, *Sehima nervosum*, and *Heteropogon contortus*. *Acacia senegal*, *Prosopis juliflora*, *Boswellia serrata*, *Lantana camara*, *Grewia tanex*, *G. flavescens*, *Dichrostachys cinerea*, *Diospyros montana*, and *Capparis sepiaria* are found. These forests have a network of seasonal nallahs.

On being informed of the presence of Green Avadavat in the Kaler Forest Block by a forest guard, we visited the